whereas DoP is entitled to 5% commisison. The GSS can charge Rs. 5/- for passing on the message to the concerned persons in the village.

**Replacement of telephone exchanges in Andhra Pradesh**

2584. DR. DASARI NARAYANA RAO: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government have any plans for the replacement of all analogue telephone exchanges in Andhra Pradesh by digital electronic exchanges within a time frame; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI ASHOK PRADHAN): (a) All the analogue telephone exchanges in Andhra Pradesh have already been replaced by digital electronic exchanges;

(b) Does not arise in view of (a) above.

**Cellular services in Guwahati by Reliance**

2585. SHRI INDRAMONI BORA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the fact that the cellular phone services provided by the sole provider the Reliance, at Guwahati has not been running smoothly to the dismay of the subscribers;

(b) whether any steps are being taken by Government for improvement of the services; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI ASHOK PRADHAN): (a) to (c) The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

**Postmen with telephone**

2586. SHRI MOOLCHAND MEENA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are planning to cover an additional 8,000 villages across the country under the scheme of village postman offering telephone servies;

(b) if so, whether the project taken by BSNL, in co-ordination with the Department of Posts on a pilot basis in 8,000 villages since December last, was a success;

(c) if so, the total villages that would be covered under this scheme in the year 2003-04;

(d) whether private sector has not been able to make their commitment on rural telephony; and

(e) if so, the punishment that has been given to them for not honouring their commitment?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI ASHOK PRADHAN): (a) Government has already initiated measures for expansion of the existing Grameen Sanchar Sewak (GSS) scheme across the country for providing telephone facilities in rural villages through the village postmen.

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) Villages that would be covered under this scheme during 2003-04 are being identified for proper-signal strength of Wireless in Local Loop (WLL) system.

(d) and (e) Private operators have not fulfilled their obligations for rural telephony. Liquidated damage charges to the tune of Rs.53.75 crore have been recovered from priviate operators. Notices have been issued to private operators in May 2003 to proivde VPTs as well as submit plans to provide balance VPTs by the end of 2003 failing which steps for encashment of Performance Bank Guarantee will be initiated. Five private operators have responded to the notice. One operator has taken stay against the notice issued. This has resulted in increase of provision of VPTs by private operators. The progress of provisioning of VPTs by private operators is being watched closely.